

BQX
4138
.L6M

CATHOLIC
CONFESSIONAL

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



3 1761 02158091 5

McKEON

THE CATHOLIC CONFESSIONAL

— and the —

SACRAMENT OF P E N A N C E



U. S. COPYRIGHT

SECURED 1903

By *Rev. Albert McKeon, S. T. L.*

St. Columban, Ontario, Canada.

TRANSFERRED
ST. MARY'S SEMINARY
+
1885



The Reverend Father Henry Garnett, hanged in England, on May 3rd, 1606, because he failed to disclose sins which his political enemies supposed had been revealed to him in the Catholic confessional. He prayed for his enemies whilst he was dying.



(1) The assassin stealing the parish priest's gun. (2) The assassin kills an honest farmer in order to marry his victim's wife. (3) The assassin, after concealing the gun in the vestry, confesses his murder to the parish priest, in order to silence an important witness. (4) The assassin swears away the priest's life, and charges him with the crime of murder. (5) The innocent priest unjustly condemned to life imprisonment in the coal mines of Siberia. (6) Late at night the priest reads his Latin breviary, whilst his fellow prisoners are asleep. (See 5th and following paragraphs.)

The Catholic Confessional *and* *The Sacrament of Penance*

By the Rev. Albert McKeon, S. T. L., St. Columban, Ontario

MY DEAR READER :

1. This earth is not our true home. It is only a place of trial, a place of probation. And yet, upon our few short years of probation here below, will depend a happy or miserable eternity. "We have not here a lasting city," says the Bible, "but seek out that is to come." Hence our great and permanent work is to save our immortal souls and thus prepare them for Heaven. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His Justice," says Christ. "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?"

2. The necessity of penance, which signifies internal repentance as well as external works of satisfaction, is frequently pointed out in Holy Writ. What does God say in the 18th chapter of Ezechiel? "Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities;" and what does God say in the 2nd chapter of Joel? "Be converted to me with all your hearts, in fasting, in weeping and in mourning;" and what does the Great Herald of the Messiah say in his 2nd chapter of St. Luke's Gospel? "Who hath shown you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bring forth fruits worthy of penance;" and what does Christ say in the 4th chapter of St. Matthew's gospel? "Do penance for the Kingdom of God is at hand;" and, lastly, what does Christ say in the 13th chapter of St. Luke's gospel? "I say unto you except you do penance you shall all perish."

3. In the face of these words of Almighty God Himself, some people are foolish enough to say "Oh no, Penance is not necessary, confession is not necessary; The Lord paid all the debt, I'll simply trust in the Lord." As well might they jump from a lofty church tower, exclaiming, "I will simply trust in the Lord." That kind of trust is an

insult to God. It is not an evidence of faith ; no, it is an evidence of presumption, and "presumption is a foolish expectation of salvation without taking the proper means to obtain it." The law of penance, therefore, has God for its author and is absolutely necessary for all, who by mortal sin, have forfeited their right to Heaven.

4. And surely, if we consider the infinite perfections of God, His goodness, His mercy, His supreme dominion over us as our Creator, our Redeemer and Judge, and, if we also consider the awful malice of mortal sin, the many insults we have offered to His Sovereign Majesty, the many wounds we have inflicted on the adorable heart of Jesus by our countless transgressions, then we will most eagerly and gratefully have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance, which is the most effectual means of disarming the justice of God, the most effectual means of winning back His infinite love, and the most effectual means of blotting out from the Book of Life, forever, the countless sins recorded against us.

5. True enough, the power of absolving from sin comes from God alone. It is a power wholly divine, not human : hence, the power to forgive sins can be exercised only by Almighty God or by certain persons to whom God has delegated this power. For any man to try to absolve from sin, without having received from God the divine power to forgive sin, would be an act of downright blasphemy. Only consider the malice of mortal sin. It is a grievous offence against God. It raises the red flag of rebellion against His Sovereign Authority. It aims a poisoned arrow at His Divine Majesty. It minimizes and ignores the dependence of the creature upon the Creator. It destroys the supernatural life of the soul with all its splendid train of virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost. (Rom. VI, 23 ; VIII, 10—13.)

6. From the moment a man commits a mortal sin he ceases to be a friend of God and an heir to the Kingdom of Heaven. Forthwith he becomes an enemy of God, a victim of His Justice, a slave of Satan and a confederate of hell. He turns his back on God, and spurns Christ's invitation to Heaven. Nay, more, he rebels against his Creator, betrays his Divine Master and proves himself a monster of ingratitude. He is degraded and disinherited. His soul is no longer a temple of the Holy Ghost, it is profaned and defiled by mortal sin. Ah, yes ! by mortal sin the soul is deprived of all its beauty, stripped of all its dignity, robbed of all its spiritual treasures and reduced to the lowest ebb of misery. (Gal. 5 : 19—21 ; Matt. 25 : 35.)

7. Without God's grace we can do absolutely nothing in the supernatural order. Have you ever wandered out to the fields on a bright summer morning and viewed the glorious landscape tinted by the countless beauties imparted by the sunlight ? Withdraw the sunlight and all the beauties of the landscape disappear. So too all the beauties

of the soul are wrapped up in the glorious brilliancy of sanctifying grace. Now mortal sin banishes sanctifying grace and blackens your soul ; but the Sacrament of Penance banishes mortal sin and gladdens the soul, just as the sunlight dispels darkness and gladdens the landscape.

8. For all those who have committed mortal sin there remains but one of two alternatives ; either an everlasting hell or the Sacrament of Penance in reality or desire. The law of penance goes back to the very cradle of humanity. The patriarchs and prophets, the saints and seers of the Old Testament all practised this virtue. Elias and Moses kept a fast of forty days similar to the fast of Lent. Christ commissioned the pastors of the Catholic Church to preach penance, "For the Kingdom of God is at hand." The pious Catholic monks of Europe, Asia and Africa, the countless religious communities scattered over the world for hundreds of years have ever remembered the warning words of Christ, "Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish."

9. God can forgive you your sins through the agency of others, because God is Omnipotent. Now we obey God whenever we approach the agencies which God has appointed to aid and help us. But Parson Jones cries out : "I don't want any of those agencies : I will go to God Himself for everything." But if God appoints an agency and commands us to use it, then, we are bound in obedience to God to use that agency. In the 20th chapter of St. John's gospel, Christ says to the priests of the Catholic church : "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them." In the 28th chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, Christ says to His priests : "Behold I am with you all days even to the end of the world," and in the 10th chapter of St. Luke's gospel, Christ says to the priests of the Catholic Church : "He that despiseth you despiseth Me."

10. But Parson Jones cries out again : "I despise all priests, I can forgive my own sins by confessing to God alone in secret." In saying this the parson claims he can forgive his own sins by simply telling God something which God knows all ready. Now God has never promised forgiveness for such an act of presumption as this. Such a practice has no foundation in the doctrines of Christ recorded in God's Holy Bible. No Catholic Pope, Bishop or priest ever claims to have power to forgive his own sins by merely telling them to God, who knows them already. Such arrogance and presumption find no place in the Catholic Church, because all the prelates in the Church from the Pope down obey God and go to confession to other priests instead of despising them as Parson Jones does. Therefore, let us hear no more about "priestly assumption of power" : First, because Catholic priests assume no power except the power which Christ gives them ; secondly,

because Parson Jones and other parsons presume to exercise power which Christ never promised to any man, viz. : The power to forgive their own sins by telling God something that God knows already.

11 God has always admitted the ministry of His friends on earth, to reconcile His enemies to their Divine Master. In the 24th chapter of the Book of Job God refused to forgive Eliphaz, the Timanite, until Job interceded for him. Now, if Eliphaz had spurned the ministry of Job and said, "No, I will not allow Job to stand between God and me ; I will go straight to God Himself," then, God would not have pardoned Eliphaz. And still, modern heretics continue to shout " no confessor, no intermediary between God and me."

12. In the 4th Book of Kings the Bible tells us that God cured Naaman, the Commander-in-Chief of the Syrian army, not by intervening directly, but through the ministry of the prophet Eliseus, who commanded him to wash seven times in the River Jordan. If Naaman had ignored the prophet and gone straight to God, then God would never have cured him.

13. The blind man cured in the 9th chapter of St. John's gospel, if left to himself, would not have selected salivated clay, but God always acts in His own way. The blind man was not so foolish as to say " no clay, no clay for me : I will go straight to God." Had he said this God would have left him in his blindness, just as he leaves Parson Jones to-day.

14. When the ten lepers came to our Lord to be healed (St. Luke XVII, 12). Christ did not heal them himself. No, he sent them to the priests, and, as they went, they were made clean. This fact confirms the Catholic contention that God desires us all to be cured of the leprosy of sin through the instrumentality of priests divinely appointed. The ten lepers obeyed, went to the priests and were cured. We should do likewise. The poor cripples at Bethsaida, waiting for their turn to follow the angel into the pond of holy water to be cured, did not indulge in mock heroics and exclaim " no agency for me, Oh Lord, you must come and cure me yourself directly ; I won't go near that water."

15. When Saul was struck blind on the road to Damascus, God sent him to (Father) Ananias to be cured, and in the 9th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles the Bible tells us that scales fell from his eyes and his eyesight was restored. Saul did not say " No Ananias for me. I will go straight to Christ. God must cure me himself. I will not go to any priest.

16. But the proud people who shout "No priests, no agency of man for me" are not consistent ; if they were they should stand up in their meeting house and say "hold on parson, stop that epistle of Peter, and that epistle of James and that epistle of John ; I want to have no-

thing at all to do with Peter, or James, or John. Christ must come to us and tell us Himself what we have to learn and what we have to do.

17. Therefore, God acts through the ministry of men on earth and so we must obey God. It is not for us sinners to dictate the terms of reconciliation. God reserves that right to Himself. He gave us the decologue through the ministry of Moses, and now he gives absolution through the ministry of his priests.

18. Our next argument for the Sacrament of Penance is based upon the 18th, 19th and 20th verses of the 5th chapter of the 2nd Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. In the 18th verse, the Bible says : "God hath reconciled us to himself through Christ." This doctrine, like every other doctrine of the New Testament, is inculcated in the Catholic Church. On the cross Christ earned the price of our redemption ; in the confessional that price is applied in paying off the debt of our immortal souls.

19. True enough, the power of forgiving sins comes from God alone. But, in the first place, God could delegate that power to the priests of His Church because He is Omnipotent ; in the second place, God should delegate that power, otherwise it would be impossible to obey the command of the Christ, (John 20) "Forgive sins, as the Father hath sent me, so also I send you." "Teach all nations," Matt. 28 : 19 ; and lastly, Christ did delegate that power to the priests of His Church as the Bible tells us. What does Christ say to the priests of His Church in the 18th chapter of St. Matthew's gospel ? "Whatsoever you shall loose on earth it shall be loosed also in Heaven." And what does Christ say in the 20th chapter of St. John's gospel ? "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them." And what does Christ say to the priests of His Church in the 28th chapter of St. Matthew's gospel ? "Behold I am with you all days even to the end of the world."

20. But the New Testament writer, St. Paul, thus continues his line of argument : "And He, (Christ), hath placed in us the ministry of reconciliation." Knowing the gravity of the statement which He made, the inspired writer, St. Paul, emphasizes the wonderful power of the Catholic priesthood by saying : "We, (the priests of the Church) are therefore ambassadors for Christ, God, as is it were, exhorting through us." Now let any sane man put these inspired words of St. Paul side by side with the words of Christ recorded in the 20th chapter of St. John's gospel, and what other conclusion can he come to than that Christ has established a ministry in the Catholic Church, to which He has intrusted the power of reconciling sinners to God.

21. But here comes an important question : How is this reconciliation to be made ? Is Christ to come around to each sinner and say to him : "Mr.. your sins are forgiven," or "Madam, your sins are for-

given," or is the Divine power to be delegated to others? The Bible answers this important question correctly when it declares that Christ delegates this power to the priests of the Catholic Church. Hence, St. Paul concludes his inspired argument in 2nd Corinthians, 5th chapter and 20th verse by saying: "For Christ therefore we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us." "For Christ we beseech you to be reconciled to God." Now it is evident from these inspired words that Christ appointed the priests of His Church to be His ambassadors endowed with supernatural power to reconcile sinners to God, and this wonderful reconciliation is accomplished by a worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance.

22. "Who can forgive sins but only God? Why does this man speak thus?" These questions were first propounded by the Scribes and Pharisees more than 1,800 years ago; these same questions were propounded again in the 16th century, and they have been echoed and re-echoed every day through the ages since. In the 2nd chapter of St. Mark's gospel, a poor, old, palsied man was brought to our Saviour to be cured, and before our Saviour cured him He absolved him from his sins, and said: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." The Scribes and Pharisees were schooled, and holding up their hands in mock heroics they cried out: "He blasphemeth! Who can forgive sins but God only?" Then Christ, the Eternal Priest, said to them: "That you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, I say to thee, arise." Then Christ by a miracle cured the man sick with the palsy. Therefore in the 2nd chapter of St. Mark's gospel, Christ proved that not only the Son of God, but the Son of Man, the Son of Mary, hath power on earth to forgive sins. Now, that same Son of Man, Jesus Christ, says to the pastors of the Catholic Church, in the 20th chapter of St. John's gospel: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; as the Father hath sent me I also send you," that is I, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, now give you priests the same power to forgive sins that the Eternal Father has given me. Hence, the Bible tells us that St. Paul absolved from sin in the person of Christ. (II Cor. 2: 10.)

23. And yet, in the face of all the Scriptural evidence, Parson Jones asserts that God never conferred upon man the power to forgive sins. But God Himself says that He did. What did God inspire St. Peter to say in the 2nd chapter of the Acts of the Apostles? "Do penance and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Here, then, is the Catholic argument in form: In the 2nd chapter of the Acts the Bible tells us that that Baptism forgives sin. Now, in the 28th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel the Bible tells us that Christ gives His priests power to baptize all days even unto the end of the world. Therefore, Christ gives his priests

power to forgive sins all days, even unto the end of the world. Baptism can be received only once. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism," says the Bible in Ephesians, 4th chapter and 5th verse. Baptism is a sacrament by which sins are forgiven that are committed before baptism. Penance is a sacrament by which sins are forgiven that are committed after baptism.

24. No Catholic priest will ever tell you that any man's sins are forgiven by confession alone, because confession is only one of the six links of the sacramental chain that raises the sinful adult from guilt to grace and from earth to Heaven. Six essential elements are required, namely : Ordination, jurisdiction and absolution for the priest, and contrition, confession and satisfaction or atonement for the penitent.

25. The penitent must truly confess all his mortal sins as well as he can remember them after a strict examination of conscience : he must be sincerely sorry for all his sins, forgive his enemies and promise to amend his ways. He must restore his ill-gotten goods and pay his honest debts when able. He must repair the injuries done to others by word, deed, or omission, and he must also quit the immediate and proximate occasion of grievous sin. Though the priest be validly ordained, may have jurisdiction from the Bishop, and may hold up his hands and give absolution, let me tell you that absolution is not ratified in Heaven unless the sinner is sorry for his sins and sorry too, from a supernatural motive, which may be either the love of God, the fear of Hell, or the loss of Heaven. Every intelligent Catholic understands full well that the forgiveness of sin means that the everlasting punishment due to mortal sin is blotted out of existence for all eternity and not merely hidden or concealed.

26. Suppose a person cannot get confession ; in such a case, perfect contrition, including a desire to be absolved, will suffice. God never commands us to do that which is impossible. Perfect contrition has place when the soul sorrows for its sin from a motive, whose essence is the pure love of God alone. This desire, when coupled with a desire to make a good confession to a priest and thereby be reconciled to God, begets God's love. God's love is grace and grace works out our salvation (Ezech. 33-12 ; John 14-21). God never forsakes the sinner unless affection for sin becomes so rooted in the soul as to verge upon final impenitence. In imperfect contrition or attrition the motive may be the fear of missing Heaven or the fear of going to Hell. Now, even one of these motives, when sanctified and perfected by priestly absolution is sufficient to reconcile the sinner to God, yet sorrow for sin is necessary in every sacramental confession.

27. But what does Christ say to the Pope of Rome in the 16th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel ? "I say to thee : thou art Peter, and

upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shall bind on earth it shall be bound also in Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth it shall be loosed also in Heaven." In the 18th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, Christ promised the power of "binding" and "loosing" to all the pastors of His church.

28. On the eve of his departure for a far-off country, a great king hands you the keys of his palace and gives you to understand that he is conferring upon you an extraordinary privilege. What would you say, if, upon enquiry, you discovered that the king had given similar keys to every other man living ? Now do you imagine that when Christ, the Great King, gave the pastors of the Catholic Church the power to bind and loose, that He gave the same power to every other man on earth ? How could Christ's apostles bind sinners if He also gave the same sinners power to bind His apostles ? Does not the metaphor of the keys imply the concurrence and consent of the key holders in order to gain admission into Heaven, whose gate is closed against everything defiled, as we are told in the 27th verse of the 21st chapter of the last book in the Bible.

29. And of what avail would keys be for a house that had neither bolts nor locks ? and how could Christ's apostles bind sinners that had full powers to loose their bonds ? Did not Christ give the keys of Heaven to Peter, the Pope of Rome, and to no other bishop except Peter's lawful successors ? But of what use would the keys of Heaven be to the Pope if all the treasures of Heaven were to be kept wide open to all comers, good and bad ? Would any wise man, to say nothing of Christ, the Good Man, give his vicegerent a bunch of keys to open a treasure or palace that had neither locks nor doors to exclude any person, worthy or unworthy ? Is not Christ the author of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction and other spiritual treasures of His Kingdom, which He refers to as precious Pearls ? And did not Christ, in Matthew, 8th chapter, forbid the priests of His church to cast their sacramental pearls before swine ? Did not Christ appoint judges and pastors to decide what people are worthy to receive these sacramental treasures ? Does not St. Paul, in his First Corinthians (11 — 8), warn every sinner to "prove" himself ? Now, how can the sinner prove himself without confessing in secret to the priests of the Church, to whom Christ said " Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth it shall be bound in Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth it shall be loosed also in Heaven ?"

30. Therefore, every adult guilty of grievous sin is required by the law of God to have recourse to that church invested with the power of binding or loosing in order to be reconciled to God, and thus gain en-

trance into Heaven. But the power of binding and loosing cannot be exercised without

AURICULAR CONFESSION

To confess your sins to God alone is a good religious act ; but, if you despise the Catholic Confessional, will you ever hear the voice of Christ in response, saying to you "be of good heart, Son, thy sins are forgiven thee ?" No ! because Christ has already said to the priests of His Church "He that despiseth you despiseth me." (Luke 10-16)

31. And now certain conditions must be fulfilled in order to make auricular confession efficacious. 1st, the sinner must prepare himself by prayer and examination of conscience ; 2nd, he must confess all his grievous sins without equivocation ; 3rd, he must repair the injury done to others, in their person, property or character ; 4th, he must be sorry for sins, either because they offend God, deprive him of heaven, or condemn him to hell ; 5th, he must resolve firmly with God's help to sin no more ; 6th, he must forgive all his enemies ; 7th, he must resolve to avoid all the immediate and proximate occasions of mortal sins. If any of these conditions are wanting, the Catholic penitent knows that the absolution given by the deceived priest is null and void, and he (the penitent) has only added to his former guilt the horrid crime of sacrilege.

32. The sole object of auricular confession is to bring man nearer to God ; to purify and strengthen his spiritual being ; to lift him up and enable him to walk alone on the narrow road that leads to Heaven, (Matt. 8 : 14). It was only for the carrying out of such a purpose that Christ in His mercy instituted the Catholic Confessional, and for that reason the Catholic Church requires of every penitent a hatred and detestation of sin, a contrite and humble heart, which God never despises, and She requires also an incipient love of God as the fountain of all justice.

33. The opposition to the Catholic Confessional is founded, not upon the Bible, but upon a proud tradition which no Bible lover can trace beyond the 16th century. Sin is an evidence of pride ; confession is its antidote and gives evidence of humility. "God resists the proud but gives His grace to the humble." The storm that breaks the cloud-capped pine does not even bend the lowly violet. To deny our guilt is cowardly ; to confess our guilt is manly. One denies his guilt, another pleads guilty. Which is the more degraded ? The power which enables a man to discern and describe future events just as accurately as if they were really present, is a divine power that God conferred upon the prophets Isaias, Jeremiah, Ezechiel and Daniel. And still some people continue to affirm that God never conferred divine power upon any man. Wonders wrought in favor of the one true church are wrought

by the power of God. Wonders wrought in opposition to the one true church are wrought by the power of the devil. This is the key to all miracles.

34. Sacramental confession is an humble, sincere and contrite accusation of our sins to an approved priest, in order to obtain forgiveness. God always uses agents to execute His designs, except when He wishes to establish a divine religion or church. In establishing a religion, God always does the work Himself in a visible manner ; but when a man becomes involved in legal difficulties he should go to a lawyer ; when a man becomes afflicted with diseases of the body he should go to a doctor, who is a physician of the body ; and so, when a man becomes afflicted with diseases of the soul, he should go to a Catholic priest, who is a physician of the soul. God helps His priests now as He did in the days of Moses. The devil sometimes helps his so-called divine healers, as he helped Pharaoh's magicians in the days of old.

35. Soon after His glorious resurrection from the dead, Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance. What does Christ say to the priests of the Catholic Church in the 20th chapter of St. John's Gospel ? " As the Father hath sent me, so also I send you." And when He said this He breathed upon them and said : "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them and whose sins you shall retain they are retained." Now, let us reason this way: if Christ, the God of Heaven and earth, desired to confer upon the priests of the Catholic Church of Rome the power of forgiving sins, what plainer, what clearer, what better, what more emphatic, what more expressive words could He have used than the words I have just quoted from St. John's Gospel, found in every Bible in the land ? Christ was then alone with his Apostles to whom he was wont to explain anything that seemed obscure in His discourses to the multitude ; Christ was then about to withdraw His visible presence from the world until the day of judgment ; Christ was then about to fulfil all the promises made to His chosen ambassadors. Can we suppose, under such circumstances as these, that Christ spoke in a manner calculated to deceive His own Apostles as well as all future generations ? Can we suppose that Christ would say one thing, repeat it, emphasize it, and, after all, mean something else ? Just before he ascended into Heaven, Christ gathered the priests of the Catholic Church around Him and said to them : " As the father hath sent Me so also I send you . . . receive ye the Holy Ghost . . . whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them," that is, I now give you the same power to forgive sins that My Eternal Father gave Me.

36. At Creation's dawn, when God conferred upon man a spiritual nature, "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man be-

came a living soul," as Genises has it (Gen. 3 : 7). So also, when, in the 20th chapter of St. John's Gospel, God conferred upon the priests of the Catholic Church the spiritual power to forgive sins, He breathed upon them and said : "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them."

37. Now, did the power to forgive sins die with the apostles ? No, because in the 28th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, the Bible tells us that all the ordinances of Christ are to last "all days even to the end of the world." But Parson Jones refuses to believe the words of Christ. He says that perhaps Christ only meant to allow the pastors of his Church to declare that some sinners might, could, would or should be forgiven. This is absurd. For why declare to you a fact which you know perfectly well ? Why declare a sinner forgiven if the sinner has power to forgive himself without parson or preacher. If a railway conductor stood up in the doorway of a car and shouted : "I hereby declare that you are on this train," what would his declaration amount to if he had no authority to permit or to forbid you to travel on his train ? Now, if a passenger on a train said : "Conductor, I refuse to show you my ticket, I don't believe in doing business with agents or intermediaries. I won't show my ticket to anyone except the president of this railway." The conductor would expel such a passenger from his train and the president of the road would commend such a conductor instead of punishing him. Now, every Catholic Church is a Heaven bound train and every Catholic Confessional is a public office where the worthy penitent receives a free passport to Heaven and one that cannot be taken from him unless he commits a grievous sin.

38. In the thirty-third year of the Christian era, Jesus Christ appointed the priests of the Catholic Church to act as His agents or ambassadors in the work of forgiving sins, and all who despise them by refusing to confess, need look for no mercy from our Divine Saviour. For what does Christ say to the priests of His Church in the 10th chapter of St. Luke's gospel : "He that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me." The apostle Judas never received power to forgive sins. In the 1st chapter of the first epistle of St. John, God promises forgiveness, "if we confess our sins," but God has never promised forgiveness to those who refuse to confess their sins. Therefore confession of sins is necessary. Hence, even the Anglican (Protestant) church exhorts the sick to confess their sins to the minister. Proof : Book of Common Prayer, page 215.

39. The words of Christ are so plain and so accurate that it seems incredible that any Bible student should ever doubt them : "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven them." "Well," says Parson Jones at last, "I admit that the first apostles received power to forgive sins, but the apostles are dead." Here is my answer : The first apos-

tles are dead, but the Apostolic College is still alive, and alive with the life of God. When Christ established the Church, in the year 33, did He intend that His Church was to endure only until the death of St. John, the last apostle? In other words did Christ intend His Church to die and be buried with the twelve apostles? "Oh no," says Parson Jones, "the Bible tells me that Christ's religion is to last all days even to the end of the world." Well then here is our Catholic argument in form: In the 33rd year of the Christian era, Christ conferred on the pastors of His Church the power of forgiving sins. Now Christ wishes His Church to continue to the end of the world just as He established it without any change, without any diminution of its power. Therefore Christ wishes His Church to exercise the power of forgiving sins to-day, to-morrow, the next day and all days even to the end of the world. And so long as sin exists in the world, Christ's way of pardoning sin must remain in full operation. Christ would never give the apostles a divine candle to dispel the darkness of sin and then hide it under a bushel as soon as the twelve apostles died.

40. And now the priests of God's Church are called on to forgive all penitents that are worthy and to retain all penitents that are not yet worthy. How can priests obey this Divine call without auricular confession? How can they pass judgment without a knowledge of the case? How can they observe equity in enjoining punishment if sin are not fully declared? How else can a divinely commissioned judge remit or retain sins aright? The power to forgive includes the right to know what is to be forgiven. It is necessary, therefore, that the confessor ascertain an exact knowledge of the quality, gravity and number of the sins, an exact knowledge of the dispositions of the penitent and an exact knowledge of his intentions to give satisfaction both to God and to man.

41. Now this knowledge is necessary for absolution and it cannot be obtained unless the penitent confesses his sins. Christ wishes the end, therefore Christ wishes the means. Christ wishes absolution, therefore Christ wishes confession. The priest is not empowered to give absolution to every one indiscriminately. Like an honest judge on the bench he must exercise his power with justice and discretion. This the priest cannot do unless the penitent unfolds his conscience and confesses the secrets of his heart. Therefore the power of binding and loosing, the power of forgiving and retaining sinners conferred by our Lord on the priests of His Church necessarily implies a strict obligation on the part of the penitent to confess his sins in order to receive the benefit of that God-given power.

42. In the 14th verse of the 5th chapter of St. James' Epistle, the Bible speaks of Extreme Unction, a sacrament instituted by our Blessed Saviour for the spiritual welfare of dying Christians. This is what

the Bible says : " Is there any man sick among you ? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord." And in the 16th verse the Bible says : " Confess therefore your sins one to another," that is confess to the priests who were by this command of God ordered to be brought in. Now, if all men had equal powers, why were priests ordered to be brought in to prepare the sick for death ? But Parson Jones by means of a quibble, infers from the phrase ' one to another ' that he is justified in confessing his sins to any lay person, man or woman. This is absurd. Sacramental confession was instituted by our Blessed Lord, not for the benefit of lunatics who are incapable of sin, but for the benefit of people who are of sound mind. Now every man of sound mind knows that it is better to confess his sins to one who has received power from Christ to forgive sins, than to confess to one who has received no power from Christ to forgive sins. Therefore, the phrase ' Confess your sins one to another,' is never misunderstood by honest people of sound mind.

43. The early Christians who had been taught and instructed by our Saviour before He ascended into Heaven, came confessing and declaring their deeds, as we are told in the 19th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Now, the Catholic priest is not only a man, but he is also an ambassador of Christ like the Apostles, and, like the Apostles, he has power to hear confessions and to forgive sins. It is frequently said by our enemies, " oh ! confession is the invention of some Catholic priest a long time ago." This statement is correct. But who was the Catholic priest ? In the 5th chapter of Hebrews, the Bible tells us that Christ " is a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech," and in the 20th chapter of St. John's Gospel, the Bible tells us that Christ, the first Catholic priest, instituted the sacrament of penance, of which auricular confession is an essential element.

44. In the little narrow box of the confessional, that you may see in any Catholic temple, the priest works on, week after week, month after month, and year after year, until time brings him to the brink of the grave. There he toils on from sunrise till noon, from sunset till midnight, and yet, should the priest wilfully give a wrong advice to a penitent, or a wrong solution to a case of conscience, that priest knows full well that he shall have to answer for his error of judgment when he stands before the great white throne of God. The hardest work that a priest has to perform is the work which Christ has mapped out for him in the Catholic confessional.

45. But Parson Jones is greatly worried about " the influence that priests are supposed to exert by the confessional." In reply, let me say that every penitent is free to choose any confessor he prefers. No priest ever denies a penitent this privilege of conscience. A person

might come from the other end of the city or county, and confess his sins. He does not know the priest—the priest does not know him. No names are mentioned—no names are demanded. Now, what influence can a confessor exert on such a penitent? Every parish priest keeps a record of baptisms and deaths, but no priest ever records the names of penitents entering or leaving the Catholic confessional.

46. All the clergy, from the Pope down to the youngest priest in the land, are required to go to confession regularly to other priests; and I defy any one to name even one Catholic priest in good standing that does not go to confession once or twice or three times every month. Moreover, I defy Parson Jones, or any one else, to name even one Catholic who ever had to pay money to a confessor in order to have his sins forgiven.

47. But Parson Jones holds up his hands in Pharisaical horror because Catholic women go to confession in obedience to the command of God. The physician has to treat diseases of the body; the priest has to treat diseases of the soul. Both, to do any good, must understand what is the matter—the cases are similar. Yet neither the physician nor the priest need speak impurely or obscenely in the interview. "What, then, except a malignant hatred of the Church of God, can make any preacher say that a physician, in a secret office, should be trusted, but that a priest in a public confessional, surrounded by other praying penitents, should not be trusted?"

48. The mere fact that Catholic priests are unmarried is no argument against the confessional. St. Paul was unmarried (I Cor. vii. 8 :) Yet this great Apostle absolved from sin as an ambassador of Christ (II Cor. 2, 10 :) St. John, another unmarried Apostle, was chosen by Our Saviour to guard and protect His Own Blessed Mother Mary, after His death on the cross (John xix. 27). This shows that Christ places unbounded confidence in wifeless priests.

49. You can see a Confessional in any Catholic Temple. You are at liberty to examine it. The Confessional is always public for the protection of the priests as we well as for the protection of the penitent. Unless a woman be in danger of death by sickness, no priest is allowed to hear her confession except in a public Confessional. Christ was the first Catholic priest in the world as we have seen already. Now, in the 8th chapter of St. John's Gospel, the Bible tells us that Christ, the first priest of the Catholic Church, heard the confession of a woman in the Temple at Jerusalem and then gave her absolution of sins. Yes, and at the conclusion of her confession, Christ addressed words to her that Catholic priests have been addressing to Catholic penitents for nearly 19 centuries, viz: "Go, and now sin no more."

50. A woman enters a physician's secret cabinet and Parson Jones makes no protest, no complaint whatever. Later on that same woman

enters a public Confessional to obtain counsel, advice, encouragement and forgiveness. She is sorry because she has offended God by neglecting her morning or evening prayers, or she is sorry because she has had distractions in prayers, or because she may have been uncharitable in her conversation about her neighbors, or because she has not observed all the regulations of fast and abstinence during the penitential seasons of Lent and Advent; but Parson Jones lashes himself into a fury and cries out: "Look at that! look at that! look at Rome ruining our women." People that believe all that Parson Jones tells them are, evidently, people that like to be deceived.

51. The Catholic Confessional is always public, but the confession itself is always private. The confessor's tongue is tied forever. Of all the sins brought to him for absolution, outside the confessional he knows absolutely nothing. It is the most absolute secret in all the world, and there is no Catholic priest in all the world who is not ready to die willingly rather than reveal any sins told him in confession. In oath-bound secret organizations, secrecy is maintained, not in the interest of the individual, but in the interest of the society, which may be evil. In the Confessional, secrecy is maintained, not in the interest of any society or sect, but solely in the interest of a heart-broken sinner. Confessional secrecy concerns events that are past and gone forever; on the contrary, the oath-bound secrecy of dark lantern societies, concerns future events, the nature of which the individual does not know. When a confessor promises not to reveal past events he understands what he promises; but when a society man swears not to reveal any future events, facts or conspiracies, such a man does not understand what he promises to do, and therefore, he has no right to make such a promise. The secrecy of oath-bound societies concerns future human acts which may injure the human race; on the contrary, the secrecy of the Confessional concerns human acts which are past and gone forever, and which, on that account, can never more injure the human race. The Catholic Confessional is wide open: the secret lodge room is bolted and barred against all except a few.

52. A lawyer or doctor may, perhaps, under certain circumstances, disclose a professional secret. But the law of silence imposed on the Catholic Confessor admits of no possible exception. Neither the welfare of innocent persons, nor the welfare of the Church, nor the welfare of the state, nor the welfare of the penitent, nor the welfare of the confessor himself can ever justify the breaking of the Confessional seal. The fidelity of the Catholic priests to the secret trust conferred upon them by the Divine Founder of Sacramental Confession is one of the glories of the Church of God. For 1800 years and more, confessions have been heard in every land under the blue canopy of Heaven, and there is not a case on record where any Catholic priest, good, bad, or

indifferent, ever violated the Confessional seal. There have been a few priests, who, like Christ's own Apostle, Judas, fell from their high estate, but to their credit be it said that not one of them ever broke the seal of Confession. In the interest of the sanctified penitent, God has always exercised a special providence over all confessors to insure their silence, and I firmly believe that God would strike a confessor dumb should he ever attempt to break the seal of Confession.

53. In the year 1894, a Catholic priest in Germany, named Father Burtz, was condemned to prison because he refused to disclose the confession of a dying banker.

54. In 1813, Rev. Father Kolmahar, of New York, was arrested on a similar charge, but was afterwards released by the order of Judge Clinton. The priest had received conscience money to be returned to the original owners. He delivered up the money but no names were revealed.

55. In the year 1606, Rev. Father Garnet, an English priest, was condemned to be hanged for refusing to break the seal of confession. Nothing could make him speak and he walked with firmness to the scaffold.

56. In the year 1620, Father John Sarcander was put to death in Bohemia because he would not break the seal of confession.

57. On May 16th, 1383, Father John Nepomacene was led up to the brink of a deep precipice and was thus addressed by King Wenceslaus: "Come, sir, either tell me the sins confessed by Queen Johanna or refusing to do so then headlong you shall go down over the rocks of that deep precipice." "You can put me to death. Oh King" said Father John, "but you can never make me speak." At nightfall several pious Catholics went down on ropes and ladders and recovered the priest's mangled body. They placed it in a sepulchre and hundreds of miracles have been performed there since. When the sepulchre was opened on May 14th, 1719, the confessor's tongue, although dead for 336 years, had never decayed. That priest's tongue is still intact and is preserved with great respect in the Cathedral in Prague, Austria.

58. In the year 1860 a terrible murder was committed in south western Russia. An infamous hypocrite, who happened to hold the position of organist in the parish of Oratow, near Kieff, resolved to murder an honest, hard-working farmer, in order to marry his victim's wife. In the priest's house, adjoining the church, there was a double-barrelled shot gun, sometimes used for killing rabbits and sparrows. The organist, by stealth, procured this gun, waylaid the farmer by night and killed him. Then the murderer concealed the priest's gun in the vestry, and before Mass the next morning he entered the confessional, and confessed his crime to Father Kobyłowies.

The murderer knew full well that even this sacriligious confession would seal the priest's lips for ever.

59. Before noon that same day the dead farmer was found by the wayside, and the news of the terrible murder spread like wildfire. Everybody was excited. The officers of the law were all bewildered, not knowing which way to look for the guilty party. Then the cool, calculating organist went to the chief of police, and said to him in a whisper: "Sir, I am sorry that I have a charge of murder to make against our parish priest. Late last night, as I was passing by the church, I saw Father Kobylowies enter the vestry in a great hurry with a gun. When he came out of the vestry he had no gun, and he seemed to be very nervous and uneasy, as he furtively gazed about, and then hurried away to his house. Would you mind searching that vestry now, and if you find the gun there, then, Sir, you will know that my story is true."

60. The chief of police searched the vestry and behind a vestment bureau sure enough he found a double-barrelled shot gun with one shell empty. The priest was arrested and although entirely innocent was convicted on circumstantial evidence and condemned to imprisonment for life. The Right Rev. Bonowsky, Bishop of Zytomir, also believing the priest guilty suspended and disrobed him. The heroic priest was hurried away to Siberia, chained up with criminals and condemned to spend the rest of his life at hard labor far down in the dark and dismal coal mines.

61. From early morn till nightfall he toiled on breaking stones, quarrying coal and lifting heavy burdens. Every priest is required to read his Latin breviary or prayer book from one to two hours every day, and so, late at night, while his fellow prisoners were asleep, this unfortunate priest was wont to read and pray by the faint dim light of a candle: *Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace. Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum. Quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum: Lumen ad revelationem Gentium et Gloriam plebis tue Israel. Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui sancto: Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.* "Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace. Because my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples. A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel. Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

62. At mid-night he often thought of home and the awful scandal that brooded over his parish like the spell of a curse. What would become of the children that he baptized? What would become of the

innocent boys and girls that he prepared for First Communion and Confirmation? What would the young men and women of the parish think of his crime? What excuse, what defence could his people make for him? Then he thought of his broken hearted mother, brought by his scandal to a premature grave, and he saw his aged father with tear bedimmed eyes and head bowed low with the sorrow and weight of years; and, sad but reconciled, he falls asleep.

63. Days pass away, weeks pass away, years pass away, still the good priest toils on, bound by clanking chains in his Siberian prison.

64. In the year 1880 the organist and false accuser was taken ill and died. Before his death he sent for the mayor of the town and the district judge, and said to them: "It was I that shot and killed that farmer 20 years ago. I am the assassin and it was I that placed the gun in the vestry after the murder. I confessed my crime to Father Kobylowies in order to silence an important witness. That priest, wherever he is, had nothing to do with the murder. He is innocent."

65. This public avowal created a great sensation and brought both sorrow and joy to the parish: sorrow because the innocent priest had been punished, and joy because his innocence would soon be established to all the world. The Government at St. Petersburg sent rush messages to Siberia, ordering the immediate release and return of the faithful priest. Grand preparations were made to receive him in triumph, but alas, in a few hours the following telegram came from Siberia: "Father Kobylowies is dead. He died two months ago." This heroic priest had taken with him to the grave the heavenly secret of confession.

66. Ah yes! The secret of the Catholic Confessional is God secret, and so the penitent may go to the same priest for years and yet the priest will know nothing about him. Confessed sins, like forgotten dreams, are blotted out of the priest's memory forever. Therefore, let the sinner go and confess his sins without restraint; if worthy, he shall receive absolution, and never afterwards, not even on the day of judgment, shall his sins be revealed. To confess one's sins to God alone in secret is nothing more than telling God something which God knows already. Such an act is not an act of penance at all, and Christ says "Unless you do penance you shall all likewise perish. (St. Luke 13; 3.)"

67. The priest in the confessional is an "ambassador of Christ," as the Bible tells us. Though anointed he is still encompassed with infirmity. Even if he be the Pope of Rome he is obliged to confess to another priest, another ambassador of Christ. Once more I defy Parson Jones or any one else to prove that any man on earth has power to pardon his own sins by merely telling God something which God knows already. Christ gives the priests of His Church power to for-

give—not their own sins—but the sins of others. Parson Jones cannot forgive anybody's sins, and certainly not his own.

68. But another objection looms up. Parson Jones wants to know, "How can a confessor listen to tales of sorrow and sin for years and years, and still remain pure and good?" Here is our answer: Every good Catholic confessor is one of God's sunbeams on earth. Now the light of the sun permeates a corrupt world, shines upon the just and the unjust—shines upon the clean and the unclean—shines every day and is still always bright, pure and immaculate. And so it happens that every good Catholic confessor, like a sunbeam sent from heaven, still remains pure and good in spite of a corrupt and wicked world.

69. As to a Catholic confessor's fitness, who is better qualified than God's priest to comfort, to chide and to forgive in the name of his Divine Master? In college and seminary, after having waged a successful war against the temptations of youth, the priest in charge of yonder confessional was the only one out of a hundred students that was deemed worthy to become an ambassador of Christ ordained with power to hear confessions and to forgive sins. He spends from eight to twelve years in preparation for the priestly office. The science of philosophy, dogmatic and moral theology is after all only a divine method by which sinners may be induced to recover the friendship of God, and live in the bright sunshine of a devotional life. But above and beyond dogmatic and moral theology, we have mystical and ascetic theology which every confessor must know according to the spiritual wants of his penitents.

70. The most potent medicine works no cure save in those to whom it is applied. Now the precious blood of Christ, the greatest remedy for sin, is applied to our souls by Baptism, Holy Communion and the Sacrament of Penance. Every Catholic priest is a specialist in all diseases of the soul, wise with the wisdom of centuries, to say nothing of the Divine assistance promised by Him who said to the priests of His Church: "Behold I am with you all days even to the end of the world." (Matt. 28 : 20.)

71. Ah yes! The Catholic priest is trained from his youth and all along he is educated with this purpose in view. Moreover he is carefully trained for his sacred calling by the cleverest and holiest men who spend nearly all their time from 4 o'clock in the morning till 10 o'clock at night in praying and teaching. The candidate for the priesthood studies holy Scripture, dogmatic and moral theology, including the art and science of guiding the conscience. All cases of conscience are carefully studied and the young man is taught how to decide them. Day after day, and year after year he studies on; and examination after examination follows until his ordination by the Bishop.

72. The candidate first receives the rite of tonsure. Later on the

Bishop confers the four minor orders and thus he becomes Ostiarius, Lector, Exorcist and Acolyte. One year after that time he becomes a sub deacon ; he is allowed to sing the epistle at Mass, but has no power to forgive sins. Another year is spent in prayer and study and then the Bishop ordains him a deacon and gives him permission to preach and sing the gospel of the Mass, but gives him no power to forgive sins. Still another year is spent in penance, study, prayer and meditation. After that the Bishop raises the pious ecclesiastic to the glorious order of the Catholic priesthood, and in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost confers upon him the power to celebrate the Mass and the power to forgive sins, but that power to forgive sins is not to be exercised until he receives episcopal approbation and jurisdiction from the Bishop of the diocese in which the confessions are to be heard.

73. With the physician treating a female in his private office, there is no safeguard except that of human honor and chivalry. On the other hand, Confession to a priest takes place, not in a private office, but in a public Confessional within easy reach of other Catholics and, besides the priests honor and chivalry, he receives a special blessing from God that enables him to act, not as a mere human agent, but as an ambassador of Christ. "Fear not," says Christ to his priests, "behold I am with you all days even unto the end of the world."

74. Now, vice as heard in the Confessional is not dangerous as vice seen on the stage or read in the modern novel. On the stage, vice is clothed in a beautiful and attractive garb, while in the novel it is concealed between the polished lines. In both cases it is dangerous, because poison is still poison even when offered in a silver cup. But in the Confessional vice quails in the sight of God without mask or polish, with sorrow and shame. Vice thus presented is never dangerous to any one. Moreover, the circumstance of a poor soul struggling to do right, struggling to break the chains of sin, struggling to regain the lost friendship of God, this circumstance alone, apart from the priest's human honor and chivalry, would be enough to make the confessor oblivious of all except the salvation of that soul. And why ? Because either sickness or death, or sorrow for sin always disarms human passion and begets a feeling of pity for those who are struggling to avoid evil and do good. Therefore Sacramental Confession is a priceless gift of Heaven both for priest and for penitent.

75. And yet some people both fear and hate a Catholic priest. They look upon him as if he were an outlaw. Still the priest has a human heart, has a father and mother and sisters ; he is a member of a human family, he is a true human being. He has a human heart, but he is going to love in Heaven, not on earth. But, the priest's mother and sisters go to Confession regularly to other priests. Now, do you suppose that any Catholic priest would tolerate this if the anti Catholic

stories about the Confessional were true. Moreover, all good Catholic mothers encourage their daughters to go to Confession regularly and they will always affirm that "Mary and Annie and Lizzie are good girls because they go to confession regularly." Do you suppose that Catholic mothers would allow their daughters to enter the Confessional if, from their own experience, they were not fully persuaded that all the anti-Confessional stories are the offspring of hell? And therefore no man who knows anything of the Divine origin, Divine protection and God-like triumphs of the Catholic Confessional, will ever consent to speak a word against it.

76. And what does Christ say to Peter, the Pope of Rome, in the 16th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel? Thou art Peter (rock) and upon this rock (Peter) I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And what does Christ say to the priests of the Catholic Church in the 20th chapter of St. John's Gospel and the 18th of St. Matthew's? "As the Father hath sent Me so also I send you; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained; whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound in Heaven and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in Heaven."

77. Now how can a priest unbind the sinner unless he finds the chains of him who is bound by sin? How can a physician heal a patient's wound if the patient refuses to show him the wound? How can a dentist know what teeth to remove and what teeth to retain if you refuse to open your mouth? And how can a priest know what sins to forgive and what sins to retain if you refuse to open your mouth in Confession? Have not earthly kings power to clothe civil magistrates with their own authority? Have they not power to send ambassadors and plenipotentiaries to sign treaties and to contract alliances? Has that power ever been questioned among civilized nations? Why then does Parson Jones refuse to Christ, the King of Heaven, a common right which he concedes to all earthly kings?

78. Again, the Bible tells us (Leviticus IV, 35) that God, in the Old Testament, conferred upon the Jewish priest the power to forgive certain sins by placing his anointed hand upon the head of a sheep and praying for the sinner. Now, if God could forgive sins through the agency of a Jewish rabbi, a sheep or a goat, why cannot God, in the New Testament, forgive sins through the agency of a Catholic priest?

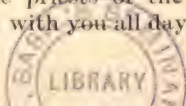
79. First, therefore, Christ can delegate to the priests of His Church the power to forgive sins and, secondly, Christ does delegate that power to His priests, as I have proved from the Bible. Moreover, Christ promises that power to the priests of the Catholic Church of Rome and to them only. The word Catholic means universal or for

all, and, in the last two verses of St. Matthew's Gospel, the Bible shows that the one true Church of Christ must be Catholic in place, in doctrine and in time. "Going forth teach all nations; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days even unto the end of the world." (St. Matthew 28; 19, 20);

80. In this passage of Holy Scripture the word "all" occurs three times, going to show that the Church of Christ must be Catholic in time "all days;" Catholic in place "all nations;" and Catholic in doctrine "all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Now, the Church of Rome is Catholic in time, having subsisted from the dawn of Christianity; it is Catholic in place because it is found in every place under the blue canopy of Heaven and it is Catholic in doctrine because all the doctrines of the Church of Rome are in perfect harmony with the revealed word of God. The Church of Rome and the Holy Bible came from the same God and there is no contradiction between them. Like two rays of light proceeding from the same source, they will never eclipse each other's splendour.

81. Now, when does a priest receive power to forgive sins? He receives it when, by the imposition of consecrated hands, he is ordained a priest by a Catholic Bishop, who is one of the successors of the twelve apostles. I, for example, received that power in the name of God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, on the 4th day of April, in the year 1880. I now receive jurisdiction from the Right Rev. Bishop McEvay, of London, Ontario. Every Catholic priest in good standing traces his Divine commission from himself to the Bishop of his Diocese; from the Bishop of the Diocese to the reigning Pope of Rome, who is the lawful successor to Peter, the first Pope of Rome, to whom Christ said in St. Matthew's Gospel "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church; I will give to thee the Kingdom of Heaven; behold I am with you all days even to the end of the world." (Matt. XVI: XXVIII)

82. Sin is any wilful thought, word, deed or omission contrary to the law of God. Mortal sin robs the soul of all its beauty and sanctifying grace, blackens and defiles the soul, closes the pearly gates of Heaven and merits the everlasting torments of Hell. In the 8th and 9th verses of the 1st epistle of St. John, the Bible says: "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity." Therefore God promises forgiveness to all true penitents who confess their sins, but God nowhere promises forgiveness to those who refuse to confess their sins. To whom, then, must we confess our sins? To God? Ah no; for God knows them already. To whom then? Surely to the priests of the Catholic Church, to whom Christ says "Behold I am with you all days; whose sins you shall for-



give they are forgiven them." Concealment encourages sin, confession prevents sin. The greatest lovers of vice in the world hate the Catholic Confessional and keep far away from it because it is Christ's potent deterrent from sin and vice.

83. With God it is the will alone that sins. Therefore sentence cannot be pronounced unless you plead guilty and say "I did it." You enter the Confessional, kneel down, adore the Blessed Trinity by making the sign of the cross, saying then: "Bless me Father for I have sinned;" which means that you are guilty, because your conscience tells you so.

84. I have now brought you to the threshold of the Catholic Confessional. What is the meaning of that little curtained cabinet which you may examine in any Catholic Temple? The centre section contains a bench for the confessor; the two sections on the right and on the left sides contain small kneeling stools for the penitents confessing or waiting to confess. On either side of the centre division there is a small window covered with grill or screen through which the priest and penitent may speak. While one penitent is confessing another awaits his turn on the opposite side. From 15 to 25 confessions may be heard in an hour. Now penitents do not go to confession to say who they are or where they came from. Like a prudent physician or judge, the priest asks no questions except such as are absolutely necessary to get the bearings of the case. This is justifiable, otherwise it would be impossible to tell what sinners to forgive and what sinners to retain. Any question concerning the penitent's name, or residence, has nothing to do with confession. You go to confession to confess your sins, without having to mention names, dates or places.

85. Moreover, every Catholic has a right to select any confessor he wishes. No priest ever compels a penitent to go to him in preference to another priest. The penitent humbly confesses all his sins not confessed already. If he has injured another's reputation or property he must repair the one and make good the other, as far as in him lies. He must promise and determine with God's help to avoid the immediate and proximate occasions of mortal sin before he can receive absolution. He must also pay his just debts, forgive his enemies and promise to do better in the future.

86. The Catholic religion does not oblige us to discover our sins to everybody indifferently. No, she allows us to conceal them from all men with the exception of one, an ambassador of Christ, to whom she bids us unveil the depths of our sins in order to obtain pardon for them. He is the only man on earth who has received that privilege from God, and he is bound by a pledge of secrecy, which has never been broken, and cannot be broken; a divine pledge which makes the knowledge of a

priest like the memory of forgotten dreams. Could any institution of Christ be more charitable, more merciful ?

87. Just before the confession, the priest blesses the penitent and says to him : " May the Lord be in your heart and upon your lips so that you may truly confess all your sins." The penitent then confesses all his sins not confessed already. Then the priest addresses the penitent in words of consolation, good counsel and advice ; warns him to avoid the pitfalls and dangers that surround him and tells him how to avoid them ; warns him that life is short, that death and judgment are approaching ; warns him that nothing is more certain than death, nothing more uncertain than the time of death ; warns him that God has promised forgiveness to every repentant sinner but that He has never promised one hour for repentance ; warns him that God has promised him a great many things, but He has never promised to let us live till to-morrow ; warns him that perfect happiness is never found in this vale of tears ; warns him that this earth is only a place of trial, and of probation ; warns him that our only true home is beyond the stars—with God and His angels in Heaven.

88. With thoughts uplifted to Heaven, the penitent, still kneeling in the confessional, fervently recites this prayer :

" AN ACT OF CONTRITION."

" Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest my sins most sincerely, not only because by them I have lost all right to Heaven, and have deserved the everlasting torments of hell, but especially because they displease Thee, my God, who art so deserving of all my love, for Thy infinite goodness and most amiable perfections, and I firmly purpose by Thy Holy Grace never more to offend Thee."

89. And whilst the penitent in the confessional is offering to God this prayer of sorrow, the priest offers the following prayer in Latin : " May the Almighty God be merciful to you, and, forgiving you your sins, brings you to life everlasting. Amen. " May the Almighty and Merciful Lord grant you pardon, absolution and remission of your sins." And then lifting up his right hand, the priest makes the sign of the cross over the penitent saying : " May the Lord Jesus Christ absolve you, and I, by his authority, absolve you from every bond of excommunication and interdict in so far as I am able and you require it ; therefore I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen." " Go now and sin no more." Then that penitent leaves the confessional and another takes his place.

VER 90. Ah yes, dear reader, Auricular Confession is a Divine Institution. Hence we are not surprised to learn from the New Testament

that the first Christians who were taught and instructed in the ordinances of the Christian religion by our Divine Saviour and His Apostles, all believed in confession. What does the Bible say in the 8th and 9th verses of the 1st chapter of the 1st epistle of St. John? "If we confess our sins He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." And what does the Bible say in the 19th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles? "Many of them that *believed* came confessing and declaring their deeds." And why did these companions of Christ confess at the feet of the apostles ever after the ascension of Christ into Heaven? Simply because they knew and believed that Auricular Confession is necessary for the forgiveness of sins committed after baptism.

91. The Christian at Work, an English Protestant paper, says :—"There is no question that the confessional, as a means for relief to a sin-burdened soul, has its advantage. It must be a great relief to one bearing the burden of some peculiar sin, to be able to go into a closet and there, through a small screen door, whisper into the ear of the faithful priest the story of the sin, and ask what he shall do. To be sure, there is the feeling in Protestantism, "Go and tell Jesus." But, even here, perplexity and doubt sweep over the soul as the questions arise : What must I do? What reparation must I make? The tempter assails me irresistibly at times; what shall I, what can I do? The agonized cry often comes up from the troubled soul that seeks relief, but in vain. We thus throw out the subject for the consideration of those having interest in the matter. Of course many may say, 'go and tell the minister.' But often the minister is the very last one to whom one would confide the distressing secret. So far as the Roman confessional is concerned, it is inseparable from the dogma of priestly absolution with which it is connected. But it would undoubtedly be a great source of comfort at times if some sin-burdened one could find some judicious friend who could serve him in this critical time of spiritual depression and conflict."

92. The Catholic Times, of London, reports that the Dissenters all over England are introducing confessionals, which they call "inquiry rooms" or "compartments;" and the Reichstote of Berlin has publicly come out for the reintroduction of confession among Lutherans. This sterling Protestant paper says "What our Church has need of, as its daily bread, is the restoration of confession. Whoever was behind him, a long pastoral career knows that our Church is full of people who desire, yea, sigh to make their confessions. There are thousands of people whom the past pursues like a dark phantom; they would like to blot out with their tears and their blood the stain which sullies the book of their lives. To heal their suffering souls they require the divine pardon imparted personally to the sinner through human lips."

93. On the cross Christ earned the price of our redemption; in the

confessional that price is applied in paying off the debt of our immortal souls. But it is said "confession is a great burden, a strenuous act of penance." In answer, let me recall the words of Christ. "Unless you do penance you shall all perish." Confession may seem to be a burden at first, but with it there is always comfort, consolation, joy; confession at first may seem difficult, but it soon becomes a labor of love. An unconfessed sin is an ever present foe, it makes a man cowardly, suspicious and malicious. Those versed in medical science recognize the fact that man is his own sharpest detective, his own sternest informer. Nearly every one has something on his conscience, extravagance, debt, falsehood, hatred, anger, revenge. Every morning after waking it is the first thought that occurs to him. He tries to drive it away but it follows him like a shadow. He tries to break the chains of sin by his own power, but he only winds them more closely around him. It is for all these that Christ, in his mercy, instituted the Catholic Confessional with power to bind and loose with power to forgive and to retain. Now, the pride of the human heart, the same in all ages, would have prompted the first Christians to rebel against the humiliating act of having to confess all of their most secret sins if they did not firmly believe that the Catholic Confessional is of Divine origin and necessary for the pardon of sins. The Pope, Bishops and Priests of the Church all go to confession regularly, but, unless we believed that this sacrament was instituted by our Divine Saviour, then not one of us would enter the confessional, either to confess our sins or to forgive the sins of others.

94. But to refuse to confess one's sins now is only to put off a good day for an evil one. There is another confession which worldlings cannot avoid and that confession shall be made before all mankind. On the Day of Judgment Christ shall appear in the clouds of Heaven with great power and majesty and all His angels with Him. Then shall follow a strict examination for all the members of the human race. This examination, however, cannot last long in the sight of God, who has seen all sins and can bring all to light in the twinkling of an eye. Like a great mirror, God's infinite justice will reflect and make known all the most secret sins that were ever committed. However, there is one exception. Sins that are forgiven in the Catholic Confessional are blotted out forever (John 1: 8 & 9); not even on the Day of Judgment shall they be recalled. (Isaias 1: 18)

95. Well, dear reader, is it not easier to confess your sins now to a priest, who can never remember them afterwards, than to confess them on the Day of Judgment to all mankind? Your confession now is an act of your own free will, and God will reward you for it. On the contrary, God will give you no reward for the involuntary confession wrung from you on the Day of Judgment. When you confess now,

you hear the heart-consoling words, "Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis,"—I absolve you from your sins. But on the Day of Judgment the words of Christ shall be not "te absolvo," no, but "ite maledicte,"—depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire. (Matt. 25, 41). Therefore, let us believe the Holy Ghost in the Bible, when He says: "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us." (1 John, 1-9).

96. Go from pole to pole, or follow the sun's light as it sweeps like a wing of fire around the globe, and wherever you find Catholic men and women making good confessions several times in the year, there you will find the Catholic people honest, sober, industrious, charitable, truthful, good citizens and good subjects, loyal to the flag of the country in which they live. The so-called Catholics who bring disgrace on church and country, are people who either steal the sacrament of penance or shun it altogether. Bad Catholics, who go but seldom to confession, would be far worse if they never confessed. A pious, grave and prudent confessor is a powerful instrument in the hands of God for saving souls, for uprooting vicious habits, for restoring ill-gotten goods, for paying lawful debts, and for repairing the injuries done to others by word or deed. In a word, the Sacrament of Penance heals the wounds of our souls, forgives us our sins, and gives us a passport to Heaven. And thus Paradise lost becomes Paradise gained. Ah! yes, the Catholic confessional is like a great ladder—as Jacob saw it—reaching from earth to heaven, and the angels of God are going up and coming down in errands of mercy, of which you are the object. The Catholic confessional is the only ladder, the only *sancta scala* on which the sinful adult can ascend to Heaven.

97. What does Christ say in St. Matthew's Gospel (7th chapt.)? "Enter ye at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are that go in thereat. How narrow is the gate and straight the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it." Truly the Catholic confessional is the "narrow gate" that leads to Heaven, but, alas! how many there are that have not the courage to enter that "narrow gate," and yet there is no other gate through which the baptized sinner may reach Heaven, except the narrow gate of the confessional, either in fact when it can be found, or in desire when that "narrow gate" cannot be found. "He that despiseth you (Catholic priests) despiseth Me. (Luke 10:10.)"

98. Again, the Catholic confessional is a genuine mercy-seat of God—a perennial proof of God's infinite love for sinners. In that blessed cabinet the soul is refreshed, in order to renew the strife against the world, the devil and the flesh. In that blessed cabinet the sins of our past life are blotted out, and vanish like summer mists before the rising sun. In that blessed cabinet a continual flood of grace flows from the

cross of Christ upon starving souls and hardened hearts. In that blessed cabinet the sinner confesses to the ambassador of Christ the physician of the soul all his spiritual maladies, his frailties, his complaints, his doubts, his fears and scruples of conscience. Verily, in that blessed cabinet, every true penitent finds comfort, encouragement, advice, pardon, counsel, remedies, and everything else that is necessary to enable him to forsake the ways of perdition, and, like the prodigal son, to return to His Father's home. Ah, yes! around that blessed cabinet or confessional hover the guardian angels of all the devout penitents kneeling there. With beatific countenances as radiant, as the morn and with wings all tremulous with gold, like cedars in the breeze at the set of sun, they shed a celestial brightness on the tears of all the waiting penitents, giving them the beauty of the rainbow, and reminding them of God's promise of a better day in a better world.

99. It is not at all uncommon to hear a non-Catholic say that if it were not for the tribunal of penance they would become Catholics. They say they are afraid to confess to the priest. They protest that they do not think it right to tell their sins to a mere man, and so on. After a non-Catholic has become a Catholic and has approached the tribunal of penance, his whole notion of confession changes. He wonders why he ever dreaded the procedure. Such a load is lifted from his heart; such a peace enters into his soul; such contentment envelops him. He has told God's earthly representative all about his innermost feelings, about his temptations to which his poor weak nature had succumbed and those which had been resisted, of the doubts and the fears, none of which he would have even hinted to every-day friends. He has listened to the kindly advice of the priest who has heard the stories of so many penitents, has counselled so many. He has knelt in the dimly lighted church and looked up toward the high altar in front of which burned the red fire, signifying that the Lord of Heaven and earth was in the tabernacle and thought that on the morrow the dear Lord would come to him in the sacrament of the altar and would be a help to him in every time of trouble. After one of these experiences the non-Catholic that was wonders how he could have been so blind as to steel his heart to the truth because of a foolish feeling of pride in connection with one of the most helpful, satisfying institutions of God's Church.—Church Home Companion. Well has it been said by Dr. Newman—a convert from Protestantism: “If there is a heavenly idea in the Catholic church surely, after the Blessed Sacrament, confession is such; the very act of kneeling, the low and contrite voice, the sign of the cross hanging as it were over the head bowed low, and the words of peace and blessing: Oh! what a soothing charm is there, which the world can neither give nor take away. Oh! what a piercing, heart-subduing tranquility, provoking tears of joy, is poured out almost substantially and physically upon the soul—the oil of gladness, as the Scripture calls it—when the penitent at

length rises, his God reconciled to him, his sins rolled away for ever. This is confession, as those who bear witness know by experience." Verily no human tongue can adequately describe the joy and ecstasy and happiness of the Catholic penitent who has just made a good confession.

100. May I conclude in the words of another convert from Protestantism, the Rev. F. W. Faber :

The chains that have bound me are flung to the wind,
By the mercy of God the poor slave is set free ;
And the strong breath of Heaven breathes fresh o'er the mind,
Like the bright winds of summer that gladden the sea.
There was naught in God's world half so dark or so vile,
As the sin and the bondage that fettered my soul ;
There was naught half so base as the malice and guile
Of my own sordid passions, or Satan's control.
For years I have borne about hell in my breast—
When I thought of my God it was nothing but gloom—
Day brought me no pleasure, night gave me no rest ;
There was still the grim shadow of horrible gloom.
It seemed as if nothing less likely could be
Than that light should break in on a dungeon so deep ;
To create a new world, where, less hard than to free
The slave from his bondage, the soul from its sleep.
But the word has gone forth and said let there be light,
And it flashed through my soul like a sharp passing smart ;
One look to my Saviour, and all the dark night,
Like a dream, scarce remembered, was gone from my heart.
I cried out for mercy, and fell on my knees
And confessed, while my heart with keen sorrow was wrung ;
'Twas the labor of minutes, and years of disease
Fell as fast from my soul as the words from my tongue.
And now, blessed be God and the sweet Lord who died,
No deer on the mountain, no bird in the sky,
No bright wave that leaps on the dark bounding tide
Is a creature so free or so happy as I.
All hail, then all hail to the dear precious blood,
That hath worked these sweet wonders of mercy in me ;
May each day countless numbers throng down to its flood,
And God have his glory, and sinners go free.

ST. COLUMBAN, ONTARIO,

June 1st, 1906,



McKEON, Albert.

The Catholic confessional.

BQX

4138

.L6M2

